


Delaware Has Preserved 143,000 Acres of Farmland After 25th Round

DOVER, Del. (July 21, 2021) – Delaware announced its 25th  consecutive round of easement selections by the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation. With the preservation of 3,695 acres, Delaware has permanently preserved more than 143,000 acres of farmland for future generations.

“Delaware’s Aglands Preservation Program has been critical to keeping our farms in production,” said **Governor Carney**. “We can all agree through the pandemic we learned how important family farmers are to ensuring food including fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and meat are readily available. Preserving farmland is not just about passing a farm down to the next generation. It’s about making sure future generations have food grown locally available to feed their families.”

In this round of easement selections, there were 23 farms in Kent County and 22 farms in Sussex County preserved. The Delaware Aglands Preservation Program has successfully preserved nearly 27 percent of Delaware’s farmland.

“We take pride in having one of the country’s most effective farmland protection programs. With today’s announcement, 3,695 acres have been permanently preserved, including 45 farms through the AgLands Preservation Program and four forested parcels through the Forestland Preservation Program,” said **Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse**. “There are a lot of partners who play a role in Delaware’s success preserving farmland, from the county level up to federal agencies by providing matching funds.”

“Each easement that is placed on productive agricultural land

protects the long-term viability of our food supply by preventing conversion to non-agricultural uses,” said **Kasey Taylor, Delaware State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)**. “Coupled with conservation activities, land preservation is vital to improving soil and water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat. NRCS is honored to contribute to this tremendous effort.”

Since the beginning of the program, landowners have donated, on average, 59 percent of their development rights value – that is, they received 41 cents on the dollar of their farm’s development rights value to preserve their farm. The average discount (donation) for Round 25 is 53.57 percent.

The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation selects those farms approved for easement purchase using an impartial discounted ranking system that maximizes benefits for taxpayers. The Foundation does not own the land but instead purchases landowners’ development rights and places a permanent agricultural conservation easement on the property. Landowners must first voluntarily enroll their farm into a 10-year preservation district before they can sell an easement. In addition to more than 143,000 acres in permanent easements, Delaware’s Aglands Preservation Program has over 41,000 acres of land enrolled in farmland preservation districts.

County governments can choose to partner with the state program and add county funds to select properties in their areas, leveraging state resources for a more significant impact.

Delaware’s statewide program made its first round of easement purchases in 1996 and has since preserved 22 percent of New Castle County farmland, 39 percent of Kent County farmland, and 19 percent of Sussex County farmland.

Kent County Administrator Michael Petit de Mange said, “Levy Court is pleased to once again provide financial assistance

toward the preservation of an additional 1,082 acres of valuable farmland in Kent County as part of the Delaware Aglands Preservation Program in Round 25. It's important for us to preserve and protect agriculture in Kent County since it's so vital to our local economy, our food supply, and the rural character of our working lands in Central Delaware."

"Sussex County Council has made it a priority to support the Delaware Aglands Program by providing significant funding to ensure working farms are preserved," **Sussex County Administrator Todd F. Lawson** said. "Ag continues to face tremendous pressure in the 21st century, and it is imperative that we take necessary steps – like purchasing these easements – to ensure this vital industry remains productive in our State and our County."

The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation Easements are available for viewing through an online dashboard at <https://de.gov/agdashboard>.

Landowners interested in preserving their farm can contact the Aglands Preservation Program at 302-698-4530 or find information and application forms at agriculture.delaware.gov. The Aglands Preservation Program received \$10 million in the state budget on July 1 for selecting easements in Round 26, expected to be announced in late Spring 2022.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees includes representatives from agriculture and state agencies. Trustees are Mark Collins, chairman; James G. Vanderwende, vice-chairman; Janice Truitt, treasurer; William H. "Chip" Narvel Jr., secretary; Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse; State Treasurer Colleen C. Davis; Secretary of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Shawn Garvin; Peter Martin; Theodore P. Bobola Jr.; Robert Emerson; and H. Grier Stayton.

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